

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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ICA-11 SSM-03 SAA-01 EUR-12 HA-05 /098 W
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R 211438Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8824
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4134

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: LE, PINT, PINS, MARR, US
SUBJ: REMARKS OF PRESIDENT OF SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONAL PARTY
ON THE PRESENT SITUATION

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO PPS PRESIDENT ABDULLAH SA'DAH: MORE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT IS LIKELY. THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT MIGHT WITHDRAW ITS PUBLIC SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS. IF THE LEBANESE ARMY DEPLOYED SOUTH OR ASSUMED INTERNAL SECURITY FUNCTIONS IN WEST BEIRUT, THERE WOULD BE ARMED CLASHES WITH "THE PEOPLE." NO FORMAL ALLIANCE WAS CONCLUDED AT THE JULY 15 MEETING IN ZGHARTA OF SA'DAH, WALID JUMBLATT AND SULYAMAN FRANJIYAH. COMMENT: THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT SARKIS COULD BE WEAKENED IF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT WITHDREW ITS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIM. END SUMMARY.

2. EMBOFF MET JULY 19 WITH ABDULLAH SA'DAH, PRESIDENT OF THE SYRIAN SOCIAL NATIONAL PARTY (COMMONLY KNOWN BY ITS FRENCH ACRONYM PPS). SA'DAH SAID HE WAS VERY PESSIMISTIC
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ABOUT THE SITUATION, MORE PESSIMISTIC THAN HE HAD BEEN DURING THE 1975-76 CIVIL WAR. HE BELIEVED MORE FIGHTING BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND SYRIANS WAS LIKELY. ALTHOUGH THE FIGHTERS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT HAD OBEYED STRICT ORDERS NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE LAST ROUND, THE CHRISTIANS HAD TRIED TO PROVOKE CIVIL WAR BY FIRING SEVERAL ROCKETS AND SHELLS AT WEST BEIRUT. HE THOUGHT THE CHRISTIANS MIGHT IN

FACT SUCCEED IN PROVOKING A CIVIL WAR BETWEEN LEBANESE DURING THE NEXT ROUND. SA'DATH ALSO SAID THE FOLLOWING:

3. THE PRESIDENCY.

A. PRESIDENT SARKIS WOULD NOT SERVE OUT HIS TERM. THE PPS AND THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT (OF WHICH THE PPS IS A MEMBER) CONTINUED TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT SARKIS PUBLICLY, BUT PRIVATELY THERE WAS GREAT DISILLUSIONMENT WITH HIM. SARKIS HAD DEMONSTRATED THAT HE WAS FRIGHTENED AND INDECISIVE. MOREOVER, WHATEVER HIS INTENTIONS, HE WAS ACTING LIKE A "FANATIC MARONITE." SARKIS SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID OF THE PHALANGE AND NLP. IF THEY KILLED HIM, SO WHAT? HE WOULD HAVE DIED SERVING HIS COUNTRY, AN HONOR.

B. IF SARKIS CONTINUED TO PURSUE HIS "PRO-PHALANGE AND RPO-NLP" POLICIES, THE PPS AND NATIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD PUBLICLY WITHDRAW THEIR SUPPORT FROM HIM. IF THIS HAPPENED, SARKIS WOULD "FLEE TO ST. HELENA." (EMBOFF STRESSED THAT HE HOPED NOTIONAL MOVEMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO SUPPORT SARKIS AND THAT US FULLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY DID SO.)

C. PRIME MINISTER, AL-HOSS ALTHOUGH HE WAS VERY CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT, HAD ALSO BECOME VERY DISILLUSIONED WITH HIM. HOSS MIGHT WELL RESIGN. IF THIS HAPPENED, SARKIS WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE OFFICE.
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4. THE ARMY AND INTERNAL SECURITY.

A. VICTOR KHOURY WAS UNACCEPTABLE AS ARMY COMMANDER, BECAUSE HE WAS TOO CLOSELY ALLIED WITH THE PHALANGE AND NLP. THE ARMY SHOULD BE DISMANTLED AND BUILT OVER FROM SCRATCH ON AN EQUITABLE BASIS. EITHER MEMBERS FROM ALL POLITICAL PARTIES OR NO MEMBERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO JOIN. AT PRESENT, MEMBERS OF THE PHALANGE AND NLP WERE ALLOWED TO ENLIST, BUT NOBODY FROM THE PPS COULD DO SO.

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B. UNITS OF THE ARMY SHOULD NOT BE SENT SOUTH OR ALLOWED TO ASSUME INTERNAL SECURITY DUTIES IN WEST BEIRUT. IN BOTH INSTANCES, BECAUSE THE ARMY WAS A PRO-MARONITE FORCE, THERE WOULD BE ARMED CLASHES "WITH THE PEOPLE."

C. THE PPS HAD BEEN WORKING TO KEEP WEST BEIRUT CALM. ONE COULD NOT DISCOUNT, HOWEVER, A SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION OF SECURITY, OR REPRISALS BY THUGS IN ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS AL MURABITUN AGAINST CHRISTIANS LIVING THERE.

5. MEETING IN ZGHARTA.

THE MEETING IN ZGHARTA ON JULY 15 BETWEEN SA'DAH, WALID JUMBLATT AND SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH HAD NOT RESULTED IN THE FORMATION OF A FORMAL POLITICAL PACT. THERE HAD BEEN DISCUSSION OF SUCH AN ALLIANCE, HOWEVER, WHICH WOULD INCLUDE FORMER PRIME MINISTER RASHID KARAMI AS WELL AS THE THREE LEADERS ABOVE.

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6. THE PPS.

A. SA'DAH ALSO NOTED THAT HE WAS "PRESIDENT" OF THE PPS. HE SAID THAT THE PARTY WAS BASED ON A "PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM" AND THAT HE PERSONALLY APPROVED ALL IMPORTANT DECISIONS.

B. HE CLAIMED THAT 50 PERCENT OF THE PARTY MEMBERS WERE MUSLIM AND 50 PERCENT CHRISTIAN. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE PPS WAS STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST.

7. COMMENT: SA'DAH'S COMMENTS BODE ILL. HIS PROPHECY THAT THE CHRISTIANS MIGHT PROVOKE CIVIL WAR COULD BE SELF-FULFILLING. SARKIS' POSITION WOULD BE WEAKENED IF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT PUBLICLY WITHDREW ITS SUPPORT FOR HIM, ALTHOUGH THAT SUPPORT HAS BEEN PRETTY TEPID SO FAR. IN OPPOSING THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY SOUTH AND THE USE OF THE ARMY TO MAINTAIN SECURITY I WEST BEIRUT, SA'DAH MAKES EVEN MORE DIFFICULT SARKIS' EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE PRESENT CRISIS. PARKER

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